

SOMETHING ABOUT MONKS

SHORT HISTORY OF THE SEVERAL ORDERS.

How They Show Up in the United States—Rev. Fletcherondale President One of the Leading Congregations in This Country—He is at Present the Guest of Rev. Kemper.

New York Tribune.

The recent discussion of a successor to Cardinal Gibbons as apostolic delegate to the United States has brought out the fact that many Catholics would regret the choice of any one who is a member of one of the great religious orders. The Catholic church is a wonderfully well-adjusted machine, and as such has often extorted compliments from those who have no sympathy with its ideals. Lord Macaulay, for instance, There is no record of any human organization at all approaching it in size and diversity of interests that has worked with as little friction and as much unity of purpose. But even the Roman church has not been able wholly to allay the long-standing jealousy that exists between the regular clergy of the various religious orders and the secular clergy. Some readers, by the way, may be puzzled by these two designations. Ordinarily among Protestants the phrase regular clergy would be taken to mean the clergy who are settled over parishes, and they would naturally apply the term to the parish priests of the Roman church. In fact, some daily papers have recently declared that American Catholics would prefer ones of the regular clergy to be appointed apostolic delegates rather than a prior of a religious order. But in the Roman church a priest who belongs to a religious order is always said to be a member of the regular clergy, because he lives according to a rule, or rule. And similarly, the settled parochial clergy are known as secular priests because they live in the world, and not apart from it, in monasteries or religious houses.

It would be impossible, in the limits of this article, to give even the briefest history of the religious orders of the church. Monasticism has played a large part in the life of Christianity, and the chronicle of its rise and growth is a department of religious literature that no student of Christianity can afford to ignore. Doubtless, in many cases, the monastic orders worked evil, and the church itself was frequently compelled to apply its discipline to them. But in medieval times it is just as certain that they were often a tremendous influence, and could Protestant historians have not hesitated to acknowledge the debt that Christianity owes to them.

The Benedictine order, for a long time the greatest order in Europe, was founded by Benedict of Nursia, who was born about 480. In 520 he retired to Monte Cassino, and devised his celebrated rule, which is an elaborate treatise of nearly eighty chapters, and is the foundation of all monastic rules. The watermarks of the order are still seen in the rule with obediency, silence, humility, works, study and work. It was one of St. Benedict's aims to extirpate the large number of "rampant monks" that had arisen in the community. All members were on an equality, and the abbot was enjoined to take counsel with the whole monastery before deciding on any matter. Moderation in eating and conversing was educated, but there was no hard and fast rule like that of the modern Trappists. In other matters the rule was pervaded by much common sense. While the life was a distinctly religious life, the members were to work as well as pray, for idleness was deemed to be the enemy of the soul. The rule of St. Benedict was, in fact, an early exemplification of a principle that has gained wide currency today, plain living and high thinking. The Benedictine monks built schools, and taught in them, and preserved nearly all the ancient Latin literature that descended down to our day. But perhaps more important than all else, the order emphasized the dignity of work at a time when monachism looked upon it as disgraceful. Still another service that Benedict did was in the missionary field, where his members laid the foundation of a noble Christian civilization in many countries of Europe. By the fifteenth century it numbered three hundred Westminster Abbey living under them.

There is an Benedictine monastery in New York, but the order is well represented in this country. The American Congregation of which Bishop Leo St. Michael of Belmont, N. H., is the president, has eight flourishing abbeys in Beauty, Pa., Collegeville, Minn., Aspinwall, Kan., Newark, N. J., Belmont, N. C., Cuylerville, Ala., Chicago, Ill., and Passaic County, Fla. The American Congregation of which Bishop Fulton M. Sheen of St. Michael, Ind., is president, has four abbeys, in Mt. Carmel, Ind., Conception, Mo., Spinderville, Ark., and Gussen, La. There are also three independent abbeys in the west.

Next in importance to the Benedictines were the mendicant orders, or friars, the best known of which are the Franciscans, also known as Friars Minor and Gray Friars, founded by Francis of Assisi in 1209, and the Dominicans, founded by Dominic Guzman of Osuna, Spain, in 1216. The leading idea of Francis was to elevate poverty as the first of the Christian graces. The aim of Dominic was to train a great body of able preachers

who could reach the masses; for it will be seen in studying the religious orders that they strove to meet many problems that are supposed to be wholly modern. Francis was a poet and idealist, and his order was a poet's attempt to make the church a pure democracy. The order brought the gospel to the poor; its preachers were poor men themselves, and wore only a coarse brown frock tied around with a bit of rope. Their earnestness and zeal gained them the veneration of the populace, while their love of learning and art attracted to the order some of the greatest scholars of the time, among them Dominicus de Soto, the famous school man, whose philosophy the Franciscans espoused, while the Dominicans adopted the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, who was himself a Dominican. The controversy between the Scolastics and the Thomists was singularly barren from the nineteenth century point of view; but to those who took part in it it seemed all important. Fifty years after its origin the Franciscan order numbered 220,000 monks. At present it has about 100,000 members. It has a number of monasteries in this country and some excellent schools.

Among the other orders which have been in this country are the Capuchin Fathers, the Carmelite Fathers, the Oblate Fathers of the Immaculate Conception, the Redemptorist Fathers, the Fathers of the Resurrection, the Servite Fathers, the Trappist Fathers, the Vincentian Fathers, the Marist Fathers and the Sophiean Fathers.

While the religious orders are still an important factor in the life and work of the Catholic church, especially in Europe, they no longer hold the position of supreme importance that they once held. Their golden age is past. While the world today is willing to give them full credit for all the good they have done, it is wholly out of sympathy with the monastic conception of duty. It is no longer admitted, as it once was by everybody, that the Divine Being gives his special approval to those who leave "the trivial round, the common task" in order that they may reach a higher life by blind obedience to a man-made rule. The rules, whether severe or easy, lies at the foundation of monasticism. Christians today are inclined to ask, where is the authority for saying that a man who withdraws from the ordinary duties of life is inherently better than the man who lives in the world and tries to do his full part in it? Christendom is grateful for the types of saintship which the religious orders have produced. But it needs today other types of saintship, reared and brought to perfection not in the cell of a monastery, but in the workshop, the factory and the counting-room. And because it needs the saintship of the common man, will bravely fight in life's battle, it no longer gives its choice spirits to the so-called higher life of the monastery. It is not Protestant opposition that has weakened the religious orders. They have declined because in Catholicism itself there is no longer the unswerving response to their appeals that in the ages of faith led the noblest and best to seek their ranks. With her great practical wisdom the church is able to utilize them today, but their glory has departed. They are no longer able to sway the hearts of Christendom, or dominate the politics of Europe.

This country seems to be especially alien soil for the religious orders. It is well known that some of them do not encourage them, and many parish priests are hostile to them, and this notwithstanding the fact that the religious orders in this country are of the very highest character, which has not always been the case in Europe. The truth is, American Catholicism has imbibed the spirit of the country, which regards the common, everyday life of the citizen as the highest life, and looks with favor on no "rule" that exalts the non-combatants more than those who are taking part in life's many-sided struggle.

The false inference that the Church teaches that those of the cloister are better than those who live in the world, is pernicious and misleading. Instead the church teaches and monks believe that each mortal has a special vocation in life, and that each individual has the inalienable right to choose and follow a certain plan of life.

Lies Will Grow.

There is not a camel to be found anywhere within the borders of Arizona, and we challenge proof of any statement to the contrary. The tale of large herds of camels roaming up and down the Gila River has for years semi-occasionally appeared in the papers of the east. The story has been denied over and over again. As a rule the number seen, in the story, varies, but it seldom reaches a figure greater than ten or twenty. In the last Frances Report of the 17th instant appears the following editorial statement:

Some 50 camels were lately counted on the Gila river, near the White mountains of Arizona, the progeny of a herd of 150 which were placed in the territory by the government forty years ago for desert cattle, but had to be turned loose and abandoned because they were not found practical after the advent of the railroad. They are said to have spread over the whole desert. Fortunately, however, does not seem to command much of a market for them without any tax or sickness following, and is evidently competent to do the work well.

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Notice is hereby given that all property holders who pay their taxes for 1896 in full before Aug. 1st, 1897, the penalty interest will be remitted.

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